

# South Mountain

## Transportation Corridor Study



Alternatives studied in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement

### What has been happening?

The study team, led by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), has completed the technical reports in support of the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS), developed the administrative Draft EIS for ADOT and FHWA review and developed the Location and Design Concept Report. Throughout the study process, ADOT and FHWA have continued coordination with the public and local, regional, state and federal agencies.

Since 2002, ADOT and FHWA have worked with a Citizens Advisory Team (CAT) that represents various groups in the South Mountain Freeway Study Area. In 2006, the CAT completed its evaluation of the Western Section alternatives and

recommended the W101 Alternative. In doing so, the CAT emphasized the importance of addressing long-term regional mobility issues, but also expressed concern regarding the possible impacts on community character and cohesion. While taking the CAT recommendation into account, ADOT ultimately identified the W55 Alternative as its preliminary preferred alternative. ADOT's decision was based on overall regional transportation needs; a comprehensive evaluation of social and economic conditions; public and agency comments; engineering elements, such as evaluating traffic data; project costs and environmental factors.

The CAT currently is evaluating the proposed freeway to recommend whether it should be built. Following the public release of the Draft EIS, the

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CAT will provide a final recommendation of “action” or “no-action” for the proposed South Mountain Freeway. For information regarding CAT membership, please visit the project Web site at [www.SouthMountainFreeway.com](http://www.SouthMountainFreeway.com).

Future CAT meetings are currently unscheduled and will be determined according to the release of the Draft EIS. Members of the community are welcome to attend the CAT meetings when scheduled. The information to be discussed at these upcoming meetings, and the information presented at the previous meetings, can be found on the study Web site at [www.SouthMountainFreeway.com](http://www.SouthMountainFreeway.com).

### What is the Draft Environmental Impact Statement?

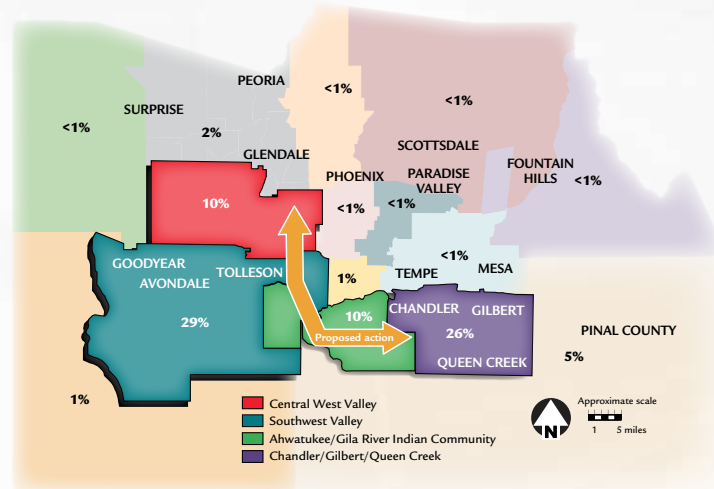
The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires that EISs be prepared for all major federal actions (or those involving federal funding) that could have a significant effect on the environment.

A Draft EIS presents information about the study’s purpose and need; alternatives developed (studied in detail); potential impacts to the social, economic and natural environment, including measures to avoid, reduce or otherwise mitigate impacts; Section 4(f) evaluation; and public and agency outreach.

**Purpose and Need** Almost 50 percent of projected increases in population, housing and employment from 2005 to 2030 for the entire Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) region is expected to occur in the southwestern and southeastern portions of the Phoenix metropolitan area (see the graphic addressing

### Addressing mobility needs in the MAG region

Seventy-five percent of vehicles forecast to use the proposed freeway were shown to have origins and/or destinations near the proposed South Mountain Freeway. A freeway would be used by vehicles from the east and west areas of the MAG region, and would address east-west mobility needs.



mobility needs above). The proposed freeway would serve the projected increases in these areas.

**Alternatives Development** To identify the alternatives to be studied in detail in the Draft EIS, a process was used to develop and evaluate a range of alternatives (including non-freeway alternatives). In addition to the most recent alternatives presented (see the map on the first page), the No-Action Alternative is being studied in detail.

**Potential Impacts** The social, economic and environmental consequences of selecting the Action or No-Action alternatives were evaluated based on a number of elements. These elements include, but are not limited to, land use, social conditions, economics, air quality, noise, cultural resources, visual resources and biological resources.

1983	1985	1988	1994	1996	1999	2001
The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) prepares planning studies for the Phoenix metropolitan area that identify corridors for an integrated freeway network.	Maricopa County voters approve a half-cent sales tax to fund the MAG's Regional Freeway System.	A Design Concept Report (DCR) and a state-level Environmental Assessment (EA) are completed for the South Mountain Freeway.	Due to a funding shortfall, ADOT identifies the South Mountain Freeway as an “unfunded segment.”	A consortium of private companies proposes to build the South Mountain Freeway as a toll road. The consortium would later withdraw its proposal.	ADOT announces plans to resume completion of the Regional Freeway System, including an unspecified portion of the South Mountain Transportation Corridor.	ADOT begins preparing a new L/DCR and EIS to examine a broad range of alternatives to address the transportation needs in the southwest valley. Public input efforts begin.



**Section 4(f) Evaluation** Section 4(f) of the U.S. Department of Transportation Act protects the use of public recreational land, historic resources and traditional cultural properties (TCPs). This includes an evaluation of Section 4(f) resources, a determination of impacts and an evaluation of measures available to minimize impacts, when warranted.

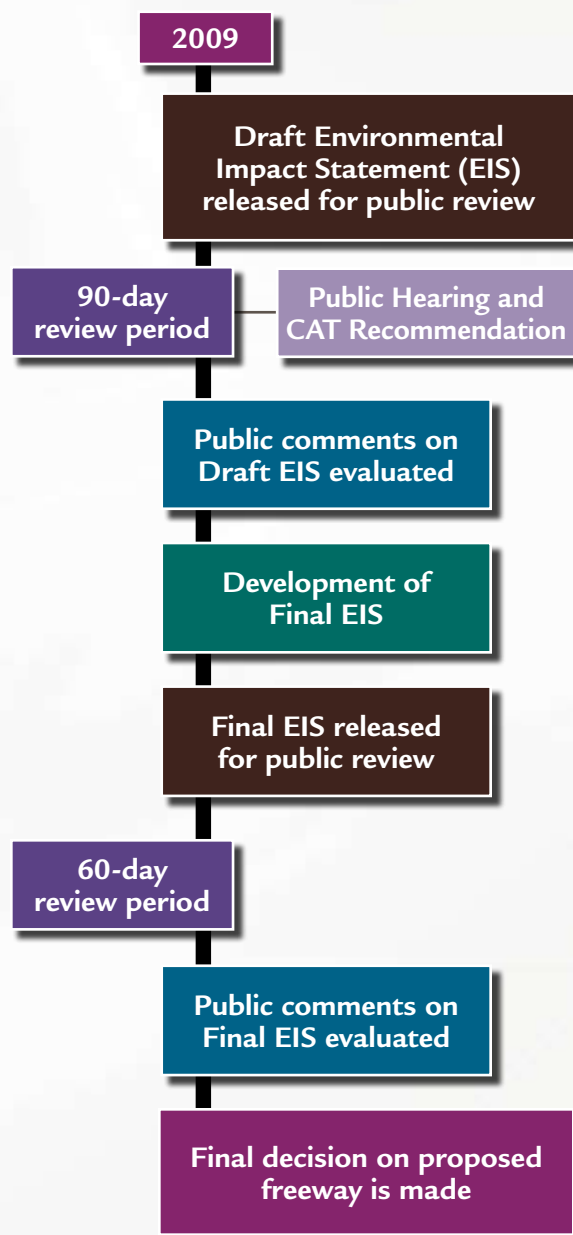
**Public and Agency Outreach** Since ADOT and FHWA began preparing the Draft EIS in 2001, they have worked to engage and provide study information to the public and agencies. Some of the outreach included holding public meetings in November 2005 to discuss and receive information regarding the proposed alternatives. Approximately 2,600 people attended these meetings. Public meetings also were held in March 2006 to discuss how Interstate 10 might be affected by each of the potential connection options in the West Valley. Nearly 400 people attended these meetings. Public and agency outreach will continue through the next steps in study process (see the graphic on this page).

## What is the status of the Draft EIS?

ADOT and FHWA currently are reviewing the technical information in the Draft EIS for the proposed South Mountain Freeway. During the review process, ADOT and FHWA are working with the Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) to address the status of the South Mountains as a TCP. A TCP is a site that is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places because of its association with cultural practices or beliefs. Consultation on this issue with GRIC is necessary to complete the technical review.

The exact timeframe is unknown for the completion of the review process; however, when the review is completed and approved for distribution by ADOT and FHWA, it will be available to the public for review and comment. ADOT and FHWA are working as quickly as possible to complete this complex and important study process.

## What are the next steps?



We are here

Summer/Fall	Fall/Winter	Fall 2003	Fall 2004	Fall 2005	June 2006	2009	2010
The study team collects baseline information and issues on the transportation corridor.	The study team determines that there is a purpose and need to continue the study.	ADOT, FHWA and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers concur on the three build alternatives plus options. These are carried forward into the Draft EIS for more detailed analysis.	Voters approve funding MAG's Regional Transportation Plan — including the South Mountain Freeway.	Public information meetings held. Expansive public input efforts continue throughout the study.	ADOT announces the W55 (55th Avenue) Alternative as the "preliminary preferred alternative" based on community input, economic impacts, environmental factors, and traffic analysis.	Expected publication of Draft EIS and public hearing.	Expected final decision on the South Mountain Freeway.

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## *Transportation Corridor Study*

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For more information regarding this study, please visit the study Web site at [www.SouthMountainFreeway.com](http://www.SouthMountainFreeway.com).

## How to Contact Us

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Study  
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